arc made to the Army under book debit system, thus, it is not correct to say that funds from the Army budget are diverted to the defence PSU and OFB.

(c) Upgradation and moderniation of Army is a continuous and on going process. Al! steps are being taken to upgrade and modernise the Indian Army, keeping in the view threat perceptions.

FRT Adiytya for Navy

4730. SHRI c: M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether INS-Aditya, an advanced Fleet Replenishment Tanker has joined the Navy's tanker fleet;

(b) if so, the main features of this new tanker; and

(c) how far it has helped Indian acquire blue-water capability?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b)This is a 24,612 tonnes Replenishment Tanker capable of replenishing Fleet Ships at sea whjle underway. It also carries helicopters which can be used for vertical replenishment.

(c) The ship can support fleet operations for extended duration and extended ranges.

Defence Personnel in Pak Jails

4731. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to slate:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report appeared in "The Hindustan Times" of 20th April, 2000 titled "Missing Defence Personnel's relatives see ray of hope".;

(b) whether it is a fact that there are a number of defence personnel languishing in Pakistan jails since 1971 as PoW;;

(c) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what actions have been taken by Government to obtain their release?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) As per information compiled on the basis of representations received from the family members of the missing defence personnel including representations from Missing Defence Personnel Relatives Association, there appear to be 54 Indian defence personnel as prisoners of war in the custody of Pakistani authorities. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which is the nodal Ministry on this issue, has been taking up this matter on several occasions with Pakistan at various levels, including that of the Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan on 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issued with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2-member Committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing PoWs. The matter was also raised in the official level discussions held with Pakistan on March 5-6, 1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian PoWs in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh. The Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

Benefits to Ex-Servicemen

4732. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has given various benefits to Ex-Servicemen vide their order No. A255/62/PC/AG/P&S/ (d)/3679/D dated 24lh April, 1979 pay and service branch;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether the said orders have been revised invicw of various representations and experience gained during the last twenty years;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether it is a fact that most of the State Governments are not adhering to these instructions of his Ministry by denying professional tax exemptions to the Ex-Scrvicemen; and

(f) if so, what measures Government have taken or propose to take in this regard and to effectiviely monitor it progess?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (f)The Government of India letter No. A25502/PC/AG/PS/3(d)/3679/D (Pay/ Services) dated 24th July, 1979 and not of 24th April, 1979 makes reference to exemption to Armed Forces personnel from payment of taxes levied by